

Painkiller Addiction: Targets Indians

(part two of a four part series)

Sara was first molested at age 10 years old by a family member. At age 27 she was raped by her sister’s live-in boyfriend with whom she also lived. She has had two significant relationships before the one she lives with now, both she left due to domestic violence. Her current relationship, she reports, is safe and she is coming to get help for her prescription painkiller addiction.

Sara is a fictitious person representative of several clients at Absentee Shawnee Counseling Services – OKC. While many clients are simply people who got hooked on opiates accidentally while recovering from surgeries or injuries, a large number are like Sara who find painkillers soothe something deeper inside.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, Native Americans have roughly three times the prevalence rate of painkiller addiction and related deaths than other minorities like Blacks or Hispanics. That begs the question why? The answer may lay in the way that prescription painkillers works and the history and culture of American Indians.

Painkillers are opioids, analgesics used for the relief of pain. They work by numbing the pain receptors of the brain.

Coming off the drugs results in a hypersensitivity causing an enhanced perception of pain, both physical and emotional. This, in turn, creates a greater need for the drug. When pain is treated long term it understandably creates dependency. The presence of physical or emotional makes the individual particularly vulnerable to such an addiction.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s Native American Center for Excellence has identified Inter-Generational or Historic Trauma as a major source for American Indian cultural pain, a shared trauma related to a traumatic shared history. The White Bison AIAN recovery community has connected this trauma with the prevalence of substance abuse among Natives.

The National Native Children’s Trauma Center, University of Montana, states, “Native American youth are at a greater risk of trauma, depression, and PTSD as a result of grief and exposure to violence. Most Native children possess strong resilience and do not develop traumatic stress symptoms. However, some need additional care.” NNCTC goes onto state that left untreated this trauma results in many disorders, including a high risk for substance



Absentee Shawnee Counseling Services, 1301 SE 59th St, OKC, OK - 2 blocks east of I-35

abuse and adult dependency.

“Tribes recognize this historical vulnerability and lead the assault against this epidemic in Native America,” remarks Dan Cross, Executive Director, Absentee Shawnee Counseling Services. “These tribal programs accept Medicaid but all CDIB card carrying Indians will be treated at our clinic without regard for ability

to pay. If an Indian needs help, regardless if they can pay, we will treat them.” Call ASCS in OKC at 405-672-3033 or Keetoowah Cherokee Treatment Services in Tulsa at 918-835-3017 or go to ascsokc.com for more information.

Contacts: Dan Cross, Executive Director, ASCS, danb.cross@gmail.com, 405-672-3033, C:918-260-1096

Getting Ready for Winter November 2012

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Use Words and Phrases to Solve

Axe	Kîhkîshka	We will gather firewood	ahamwa
Hatchet	Chaki papakyêhi	Let's all go chop wood	shka methêhani
Box elder	Wênêha châhi kîshkahaki methêhani?	I am chopping wood	yêhi
Wood	Kîna âshitami kîhkîshkam methêhani	You will chop wood	âymanethêpena
You will cut it	Mehtekwi	It's your turn to chop wood	akikîshkahâpena methêhahâni
S/He will cut it	Mayâshikwâtîha	Who is chopping wood?	hkâ methêhani